

From Hammers to Pens: Mentorship and Technical Writing

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*For more information visit:
www.algonquinc.on.ca/technicalwriter/*

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When I was asked to write an article on behalf of the students enrolled in the Algonquin College Technical Writing program, I was unsure of which direction to take. Fortunately, our class had the pleasure of attending a presentation by a person introduced as the “technical writing guru” of Corel Corporation, Mr. Ron Ferguson. Ron’s presentation was not only insightful; it was inspirational!

Ron addressed a topic that was exquisite in its simplicity, yet struck at the very core of what we are attempting within the program — *The Craft of Technical Writing*. Perhaps the most significant aspect of Ron’s presentation was his thoughts on “mentorship”, a topic of great importance to those of us involved with the Technical Writing program at Algonquin College.

From the onset of the presentation it was evident that Ron had devoted himself to a profession, not a company, and by so doing ensured both a sense of corporate satisfaction and self-fulfilment. Simply stated, the pursuit of perfection in the Craft provides not only the “value-added” factor that corporations need to sell their products, but equally important, a sense of personal fulfilment for the writer. It is that sense of fulfilment that will aid the writer in moving from job to job when economies dictate that corporations terminate their relationship with that writer.

And while one may not be able to feed one’s family on abstract concepts such as the “pursuit of perfection in the Craft”, that pursuit may one day be the

deciding factor in whether one gets a job. As Ron so eloquently states “(*Devotion to the craft*) provides continuity in your career that isn’t dependent on the fortunes of a single company.”

Why has this become so relevant to us in the Technical Writing program? While everyone has witnessed the negative impact that the recent economic situation has placed on technical writing, it is even more intimidating to those of us who will soon be entering the industry for the first time. We will have the theory, but not the “real world” experience.

And that’s where you may help...

As part of his presentation Ron suggested that, in keeping with the Craft, we all should strive to become *mentors* at some point in our career. As he spoke these words, I was immediately struck with the mental image of a blacksmith’s shop of an earlier time. The image played itself out with a young person approaching the blacksmith and entreating him for an apprenticeship in a profession that was as much an art form as a necessity. For the young person, it was an opportunity to learn from a master. For the blacksmith, it was an opportunity to pass on something that could not be imparted by any textbook; it was part of a *legacy* that he had devoted himself to as well.

Over the next several weeks you may be approached to participate in a mentorship program with Algonquin Technical Writing students.

We hope to be paired off with technical writers within the STCEO who would be willing to listen to our questions, offer suggestions and advice, and, most importantly, play a part in contributing to the Craft.

Please remain open to these initiatives and help ensure your place in the legacy of Technical Writing!



These are my reasons, what are yours?

Mike Murray

Mike Murray is President of the STC Orlando Chapter, Orlando, Florida. He can be reached at mike.murray@lmco.com

Visit the site at <http://www.stc-orlando.org/>

When I spoke recently about why it's so important to renew your STC membership, and especially important during tough economic times, little did I know that the very next day the Society office would distribute e-mail invitations to begin renewing on-line right away!

Renewing was easy for my coworker and I. Throughout the year, we mention STC and how it benefits what we do at our jobs. When it came time to renew, it was just a matter of confirming the obvious. A brief e-mail to our supervisor resulted in an immediate "Yes!"

It really doesn't take much thought to realize why, regardless of how good or bad the economic conditions, severing your ties with STC is a very bad move. If, for some reason, my employer had been unwilling to pay my \$125 renewal, I would have done whatever it took to renew it myself – *whatever it took!* Why?

Lifeline

I think of STC as my lifeline to the technical communications profession. If not for the connections that come from mailing lists, meetings, and publications, I would feel like I'm on a desert island, wondering what wonderful new things were developing in the world around me. I couldn't *stand* that! I pride myself in delivering the best possible products and services to my customers, and if I'm not keeping in touch, I can never be sure if I'm doing that. I owe myself and my customers a *lot* more!

Networking

I don't know that I ever really valued networking quite as much as I do since joining STC. I've

found out again and again just how small this world is as I've met people with similar interests who have energized me and changed my life in so many ways. I've seen time and time again members who have persistently networked and found technical communications jobs that make them excited to get up in the morning and start their work day. You can see it in their eyes in the chapter meetings. It's extremely fulfilling, and I want more!

Friendships

While I certainly expected to develop new friendships in STC, I never ever expected that the friendships I would make in STC would become the best and richest I would have *anywhere*. The next time you see me, I invite you to look into my eyes and ask me about the friendships I've made in STC, and you'll know that I'm not exaggerating in the slightest. I want to hang around these people for a long time, so you can be sure I'll always renew my membership.

Well, those are my reasons, what are yours? Is it the high-quality publications? I literally read *Intercom* cover-to-cover every month. What a great magazine! Is it the Annual Conference? I think I've been to seven or eight, but who's counting? Is it our chapter meetings with the quality content that you've asked for? Is it the chapter members themselves who are so energetic and who seemingly would do anything in the world they could to help you? Whatever the reason, it doesn't take much thought to know that renewing your STC membership as soon as possible is a "no-brainer."

Whatever it takes...





Anniversary: What You Can Do

Bill Leavitt, STC

The author is a member of STC 50th Anniversary Committee from Willametter Chapter, Portland OR <http://www.stcwvc.org> and can be reached at SKIBILL@aol.com

As some of you may already know, STC is coming up on its 50th anniversary. Although there is no official date that we designate as STC's beginning, we have determined that 1953 was the year. Thus, we plan to officially observe this cornerstone anniversary at the 50th STC International Conference in Dallas, Texas (May 18-21, 2003).

However, we shouldn't wait until then to begin preparing for this important event. STC needs to gather materials for publications and the website far in advance. Also, most chapters will want to plan their own observances.

The STC 50th Anniversary Committee is tasked with coordinating all these efforts. Also, we can be a valuable resource for ideas, scheduling, accumulating materials, and contacts.

Some chapters have chapter historians who have developed

extensive files on the history of these chapters. Other chapters may be considering creating a chapter historian position. Still other chapters should take advantage of the upcoming 50th anniversary to look into creating a chapter historian position.

Over the next couple of months I plan to provide suggestions on how to set up a chapter historian position, what should be included in chapter historical files and what historical activities a chapter may want to conduct. Also, I will let you know what plans the 50th Anniversary Committee have created for observing this event, and how your chapter and its members can participate. Finally, I will help you plan an appropriate celebratory observance that your own chapter can conduct, in order to create interest on the part of your members in the importance of observing the history of our organization.

However, I would like this ongoing communication to be a two-way street. The 50th Anniversary Committee welcomes your ideas and suggestions concerning this event. We especially want to know how your chapter keeps track of its historical records and how you plan to observe the 50th Anniversary. We'll pass on your ideas to other chapters.

Creating a Chapter Historian Position

If, as part of your chapter's observance of STC's anniversary, you wish to recognize your own chapter's history, you'll need historical records and a historian to organize those records. Many chapters, especially those older chapters, have chapter historians given the responsibility of keep-

ing the chapter records, newsletters and other important documents.

Usually this job will be given to a member who has been in STC for many years, because these members usually have a better appreciation of what should be kept, and may have an extensive memory of historical events in the chapter's history. Naturally the person will need some storage space available.

I am chapter historian for the Chicago Chapter. I have been in that position for nearly 20 years. I have chapter records dating back to the chapter's first meeting in 1955. I have every newsletter the chapter ever published. I save important correspondence, newsletters, minutes from Administrative Council meetings, materials from conferences and seminars the chapter has conducted, awards banquet programs and related materials. I have some chapter coffee mugs, t-shirts and other promotional items the chapter created over the years.

One of the most useful historical items I have is a list of the people who served as officers and committee managers for every year since the chapter formed; I update this list every year and present it to the incoming president. It is up to your chapter and storage limitations to determine what is best to save.

The biggest task is identifying the locations of the materials you want to save, obtaining them and organizing them. Frequently, through your chapter newsletter, you'll be able to identify members who have extensive files and be able to get them to turn them over to your historian.



Technical Writing in the UK

Sarah Turner

Sarah is a technical writer at Adobe Corporation and can be reached at sturner@adobe.com.

In the early spring of this year, I accepted a contract position as a 'technical author' in the UK. I moved to the UK, Leicester to be exact, in November, 2001, having done some cursory research into the job market in the UK and Europe, in general. As it transpired, I didn't do enough research, because if I had, I would've learned that Leicester, and the East Midlands in general, is hardly the 'high tech' capital of the UK, just the opposite in fact. The industry in the East Midlands is mainly automotive and textiles. Having discovered this, I proceeded to apply for jobs across the UK and Europe, including Belgium, Scotland, Ireland, and the Netherlands. I went for interviews across the UK – I feel as though I know the country more intimately than my own! I got lost in Manchester, ended up in a town called Crewe after a bomb scare had closed down the Birmingham train station, miles away from my destination and without a map. Always, one to make a good impression, I showed up to my interview half an hour late, disheveled and flustered. Not surprisingly, they didn't offer me the job.

A lot of the jobs advertised were through recruitment agencies. According to "Technical Writing in the UK" (STC UK chapter site),

the "computer industry is in the Thames Valley and home counties, while the financial institutions are in the City. Reading, Bracknell, and Slough are particularly good bets. There are also pockets of activity in other parts of the UK, including the Livingston area of Scotland (outside Edinburgh), Manchester, Cheshire, Leeds, and Cambridge. Areas where you are unlikely to find work are Norfolk, the East Midlands, and Wales." The salaries are comparable to those in Canada, however the cost of living is much higher. You should take this into consideration when looking at positions abroad. There are lots of books and Web sites about the cost of living abroad. Do your research before accepting a job abroad.

I am fortunate enough to possess a European Union passport, but if you do not, you will need to obtain a work permit before working in the UK. Contact the British High Commission in Canada for information about how to apply for a permit. The STC UK chapter Web site (<http://www.stc-europe.org/uk>) is also a good resource for information on work permits and visas, technical writing in the UK, and job hunting resources.



Stimulus

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Submissions

Stimulus welcomes submissions on topics relevant to technical communicators in the Eastern Ontario area. We reserve the right to edit articles for length, clarity, and suitability.

Please e-mail articles and advertising copy to stimulus@stceo.org or mail to the address below. Articles and media will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Most major electronic formats are supported for both Mac and PC.

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Going Global: Strategies for Document Localization

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With the slowing of our domestic economy, marketing products overseas is more important now than ever before. To help you maximize success in the global marketplace, this presentation covers the essentials in preparing your documentation for localization: More options are available to you these days, including single source and content management strategies that economize on source content development. But even technological advancements cannot make up for poorly prepared files. It is up to the writer to keep the localization process in mind when writing.

INDUSTRY DEFINITIONS

Globalization

Marketing a product so that it can be sold anywhere in the world. The marketing strategy defines your target markets. Consideration of branding, market share potential, and distribution channels defines the globalization strategy.

Internationalization

Engineering a product so that it can be easily localized. This engineering spans the develop-

ment of all source content: from software user interface design to document layout considerations.

Localization

Customizing a product for consumers in a target market. This results in the transformation of the source materials into target materials that have the look and feel of having been developed in the target market

Translation

Converting the written word of a source language into the written word of a target language. Translation is the backbone of the localization process, ensuring that the translated content has the same style and intent as the English content.

DOCUMENTATION STRATEGIES

Documentation development is continuing to evolve very quickly. Sophisticated layout programs from the 1980s that led to the desktop publishing revolution allowing companies to easily produce print-based documents are giving way to new document delivery technologies that greatly expand the world of on-line documentation. Today, content is delivered to users as print, functional PDF, topic based documentation (such as WinHelp and HTMLHelp), Web pages, and content display software based on XML.

To handle these varied formats, and to maximize content reuse, single source, and content management systems are being implemented in many enterprises. There are localization implications for each documentation strategy. Examining each strategy, their advantages and disadvantages (from a localization perspective) can help in selecting what is right for you.

PRINT DOCUMENTATION

In the past, it was the convention to print hard copies of user manuals for the consumer. Files had to be sent to a printer, printed and bound, and shipped with the product. This gives users the pleasure of having a book on their shelves, but it does not provide the practicality of online, topic-based content delivered to the user on an “as needed” basis. Printing itself proves to be an expensive option as the costs of printing and shipping the documentation must be added to the bottom line of the product cost. Printing for foreign markets adds even more challenges as printers and distribution channels have to be identified for each market.

ONLINE DOCUMENTATION

Print documents are giving way to a surge of popularity in online documentation. We now see documentation often delivered as functional PDF (either on CD or available from Web sites), HTML pages, and help-based documents. In the localization world, this is an expected trend as CDs are less expensive and faster to produce than hard copy, so products can go to market sooner and at a lower cost to the client – no matter where the market is. content and reusability

An online user guide, a printed user guide, and HTML help topics are three separate documents the user can access, right? So the writer prepares three source files. In some instances, they may, in fact, have identical text. To capitalize on the selective use of text for different output while reusing content as much as possible, single source and content management technologies have evolved.

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("Going Global" (from page 5)

SINGLE SOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND CONTENT MANAGEMENT

The terms single source and content management are sometimes used interchangeably, but most people actually have content management in mind when they think of single source development.

Definition of single source

Creating multiple output formats from the same content.

With one set of content serving as the source for the multiple outputs, a variety of documentation formats can be supported. For example, you may have a document made of 80 modules in FrameMaker. These 80 modules are combined in different ways to create a Users Guide for three different, yet similar products. By combining FrameMaker with WebWorks, the 80 modules produce the three printed manuals, online documentation as HTML, and a functional PDF file of each manual. A couple other product examples include:

- RoboHelp Office generates help files and printed documentation from the same source content.
- Epic e-content engine transforms content to multiple media, including Web, print PDF, eBooks, and wireless devices.

DEFINITION OF SINGLE SOURCE DEVELOPMENT WITH CONTENT MANAGEMENT

Combining the single source concept with a repository of reusable content is even more flexible. Content management creates one central database of information allowing the users to draw from that one database to create diverse outputs.

CONTENT MANAGEMENT

Coupling single source document strategies with a content management system allows the writer to concentrate on producing content without regard to the final format. All output formats can be created from the same source. This provides for a central repository of content, aiding in content reusability across product lines, while providing great flexibility in source file preparation and out-put format. From a localization perspective, the content management system can easily store the localized equivalents of each "chunk" of content, providing the same flexibility in localized output.

Localization pros and cons

Pros	Cons
Consistency of translation in deliverables	Significant startup costs
Shorter timeline for multi-product generation	Rapidly changing technology
Modular design aids reusability	

XML based content management

XML, a subset of the SGML standard, allows users to define their own custom tags to describe the content and to aid in preserving information about that content. Retrieval and manipulation of data can also be easily accomplished. Another advantage is that XML functions across all platforms; for example, Mac, Windows, Unix, and Linux.

The flat file structure of XML lends itself easily to the storage of content in a database structure. Content management systems are moving towards the XML format for data

storage. The use of the XML standard assures a level of cross-platform and cross product compatibility. As the technologies change, these files are still accessible.

Perhaps most significant, from a localization perspective, is the ease with which XML files can be localized. The tagged format of these files is easily accommodated in the localization process. Gone are the days of tedious conversion from proprietary formatting software file formats to obtain access to the text content for translation.

Writing for localization

Whatever your document development strategy, there are basic tips for writing effectively to aid the localization process.

These tips are not new, but they never go out of style. If you plan on localizing your product, you must be aware of certain language and formatting issues. The better prepared the original files, the better the final localized product:

Leave white space in layout

- Most languages expand; for example, German may require up to 30% more space than English may.

Develop graphics for localization

- Use call-outs and captions to separate text from graphic elements.

Limit number of fonts and font types

- Think simple: one serif and one sans serif font – not all fonts are available for other character sets.

Internationalize your document templates and macros

- Customized templates may need to be modified to function on non-US operating systems.

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Zillions and Zillions

David D. Thornburg, Ph.D.

David Thornburg is Director of the Thornburg Center and Senior Fellow of the Congressional Institute for the Future. He can be contacted at thornburg@pbs.org

We need a new number. Think about it. In a few short years we went from educational computers with 64kB of RAM to a minimum of 128MB or more. You can get 256MB RAM modules for under \$50 these days. Hard drives went from megabyte to the gigabyte range almost over-night, with many schools looking into terabyte storage systems today.

I used personal computers for a decade before hard drives were even available! Data bandwidth went from 28 kilobaud to a million bits per second, and local area networks went from 10 Mb Ethernet to 100Mb systems, with talk today of “gigabit” networks — a far cry from the 10 character-per-second modems I used in the late 1960s.

Even Carl Sagan’s Cosmos re-runs sound dated with his talk of “billions and billions.” If our pace of advance in technology keeps up, we’re going to run out of

large numbers. We’re already starting to use “tera” and “peta,” and we’re already outside the range of human consciousness (at least for this particular human). So, we’ve got to take action.

Here’s my proposal — let’s make “zillion” a real number — something truly huge. And, while we’re at it, let’s create a “bazillion” (a zillion zillion) and even a “gazillion” (a bazillion zillion). This should handle our needs for improvements in computer speed, bandwidth, memory size, or just about any other number that seems to be doubling every year or so as new gadgets flood the marketplace. The nice part about authenticating “zillion” is that it will immediately make sense to our young who have used this number with abandon since I was their age, a zillion years ago.

I have another idea to share. As an avid computer user, I have tried for years to make sense of software version numbers, and I have now broken the secret code! Let’s suppose you have just purchased the latest version of Splasterware Pro, version 5.0.2. How do you decode the version number? Very simple: The first number is the number of pages in the instruction manual (in hundreds), the second number is the number of major bugs that have been fixed (in this case, none), and the final number is the number of bugs from the previous version that re-emerged as a result of fixing some of the new ones. Note that Splasterware Pro has (*by implication*) a 500 page instruction manual.

How, you might ask, did I come up with this interpretation of version numbers? It was easy.

I recently purchased the media editing package Nuendo from Steinberg. Nuendo 1.0 has a 120 page basic instruction manual. At the same time I moved to GoLive 5.0 as my web authoring tool, and was treated to a 525 page manual. As you know, two data points define a straight line, so I quit while I was ahead.

More importantly, how did we get to the point where instruction manuals are so big? I remember years ago writing a piece in which I said I would never use a word processor whose manual was larger than the documents I create with it. Well, that rule got tossed in the trash! Just about every software tool you are likely to encounter has a very large manual, one you are increasingly unlikely to read given the tremendous time pressures educators encounter. You have a zillion things to do, and wading through a huge tome to divine the incantation for imbedding an animated gif in a nested table just doesn’t work into your schedule. So you either try to do something logical, ask a kid to help you, or just give up.

Why are manuals so big? Here’s my theory. When software vendors starting delivering the goods on CD or by the Internet, they realized two things. First, people don’t read manuals unless forced to, and, second, there is usually enough room on the CD to place a “pdf” file containing the manual. This saves trees and allows people to search for what they are looking for using the Adobe Acrobat reader’s “find” command. Say you want to invert all the text in a selection while running it through an Esperanto translator and changing the font color to puce? A quick search

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“Zillions and Zillions” *continued from page 7.*

will lead you to the instructions for a keyboard shortcut approximating the Vulcan Death Grip, after which you will then be referred to a physical therapist to get your hand working again.

I have used (or been used by) several versions of Windows, and not once have I seen anything resembling a true Windows manual. Buy just about any major software product today, and you'll find the box virtually empty – a CD and a registration card, that's it.

Of course the positive side of this is that it allows software to be sold and downloaded online. Bits make it through the Internet just fine, but printed manuals and bottles of fine Merlot do not. If you want these things, you revert to the world of atoms, the vagaries of the Postal Service and other oxymorons.

So, the crafty documentation writers have decided that, with no printed manuals to worry about, they can write to their heart's content. Never mind that the Constitution that has served as the instruction manual for the United States for over 200 years is a fraction of the size of a manual for a typical web-page authoring program. If there's something to say, the software manual will say it.

The result of all this is that kids have developed a very useful survival mechanism that we grown-ups might want to emulate: Just-in-Time Learning. You use a tool until you hit a snag, and then you seek out a resource (often another person) who knows how to do what you want, and who is willing to teach it to you (Lev Vygotsky was ahead of his time!) Anyone wrestling with a

program has several opportunities to hit the zone of proximal development where the timely intervention of a peer can help zip you to the next level.

This happens with video games all the time, and, increasingly, it will be the way we learn to use all kinds of software. The profliigate pennings of technical writers will increasingly fall on deaf eyes (if I may be permitted the kind of mixed metaphor common to final exam essay questions). Borrowing from the experiences of our young people, we will come to develop a healthy attitude toward software. We will come to realize that we are not idiots, and that if a program is hard to use, it is not OUR fault, but rather that of the developer. Once armed with this realization we will demand (and reinforce with our purchases) software that does what we want in a clear intuitive fashion.

I don't think this is too much to ask. Do you?

Of course, it may take a zillion years to make the change.

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“Going Global” *(continued from page 6)*

Develop glossary of frequently used terms

- Terminology is industry specific; translations for these terms must be standardized.

Write for international audience

- Avoid slang, jargon, and culturally biased graphics.

Write for international audience

- Avoid slang, jargon, and culturally biased graphics.

Monitor your word count

- Localization costs are directly proportional to the word count.

Eliminate excess verbiage

- Concise wording is easier for translators to understand and therefore translate accurately.

Write out the first use of an acronym

- Some acronyms are translated; some are not; a list should be provided for the translators.

Summary

While proven documentation strategies such as print documentation and customized content are still viable in the localization field, newer methods such as single source and content management are gaining in popularity. While startup costs are high and the technology changes rapidly, the advantages of the new strategies include reduced translation costs, reduced time to market, reusability of source content, and cross-platform functionality. Examining the pros and cons of each strategy helps in the process of selecting the right method for the project.

It should be noted, however, that even when using the newest tools, writers still need to attend to the basic localization issues. Understanding the key differences between English and the target languages is essential to preparing source files that will go through the localization process efficiently and produce a high quality localized product.



For more on issues of localization, visit: <http://www.lingosys.com>.

From the President

Peter Sturgeon

Peter has worked in the field of Technical Communications for over 25 years. Currently he is working as a freelance technical writer and is the Chapter president. He can be contacted at president@stceo.org

We are looking for STCEO archivist

We need an archivist to care for our historical documents as the STC approaches its fiftieth anniversary. (*Refer to the story on page 3.*)

Do you have a passion for history? Are you a collector? If so, then you're just the sort of person the chapter is looking for.

If you are interested, please contact Ryszard Cimek at cimdec@rogers.com

First, best wishes for the holiday season and the coming year from all of us on the STCEO administrative council. What will 2003 bring for STCEO?

Two years ago, STCEO had 311 members, its highest membership ever. We now sit around 260. I do not know what the current economy will do to that figure when the membership renewal period ends. Many members, including some on the administrative council, are thinking hard about renewing.

This issue of the newsletter contains an article written by the President of the Orlando chapter, (*see an article on page 2.*) offering his reasons for continuing to participate. I recommend that you read it before deciding.

One of the other chapter presidents said recently that the thing for STC administrative councils to think about is the “*value promise.*” In other words, if we promise (and deliver) value to the members of our chapters, then they will find a way to renew.

The STCEO council has been giving a lot of thought recently to providing value-added services. Some chapters are following the lead of STC office, and creating members-only areas, making formerly public information a perk of membership. This is particularly true on the subject of job banks. Opinion is divided on the subject, both within the larger membership and locally.

My preference is to be as open as possible and trust that those receiving value will want to belong. To wall off a private area for those who have the

wherewithal to remain members would prevent us from providing service and value to the profession as a whole.

Now, what constitutes value from a member's point of view? For some, it's opportunities to network. For others, it's program events. For others, it's being able to include membership on their resumes. In rare cases, I receive mail from members with ideas and suggestions. And I encourage you to continue mailing me at president@stceo.org as things come up that you'd like to share with me.

To further your ability to network, especially for those Eastern Ontario members who are not an easy drive from Dow's Lake, I have created a *listserv* – an email-based discussion that you can subscribe to. Visit, <http://lists.stc.org/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=stc-eo>

The *listserv* group will be open to all technical communicators in the area, members or not. I hope that this forum will allow us to share knowledge, contacts, tips and tricks, and any other relevant information we'd like to include.

Additional details about the *listserv* will be mailed out, as well as posted on the STCEO website at www.stceo.org, as soon as I finish setting it up and testing it. I expect that it will be on-line and accessible by the time you read this article.

Again, looking forward to hearing from you.

Peter Sturgeon

President



executive

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Rick Lorenz,
Program manager

STC-EO offered a number of program events this year. In September we held our annual wine & cheese at the Dow's Lake Pavilion. About 75 people attended, received copies of the new membership directory, and particularly enjoyed the hot hors d'oeuvres. As Program Manager, I enjoyed buying and giving out door prizes. They included books on writing, STC cups, and a coaching session with Laurel Simmons. Pictures are available at www.stceo.org.

Our October meeting at the Nepean Sailing Club featured Gordon Brown presenting "Be a SME". He discussed the advantages of technical communicators getting hands-on experience with the product, and partnering more closely with the quality assurance team when testing documentation. A lively discussion followed, especially informative to the contingent of Technical Writing students from Algonquin College.

In November we returned to the Dow's Lake Pavilion, where Fred Brown and Chris Hallgren led a panel discussion on indexing.

Approximately 40 people attended, making it one of the most popular monthly meetings ever.

For the first time in five years, the Chapter is holding a Christmas party.

It will be held at Dow's Lake Pavilion, on December 12, 2002 starting at 6:30 PM.

Refreshments will be similar to those offered at the wine and cheese, *i.e.* excellent!

Please RSVP using the form at www.stceo.org by December 6.

In 2003 we shall focus on a few important issues that affect our Chapter's active membership. We plan to have a meetings that focus on education, employment and contract strategies in an ever changing market.

We shall explore venues to advertise distinct skills represented by members of the STC.

We intend to explore the Federal Government's initiative – Government on-line (GoL) in hopes of engaging the STC members in forthcoming projects.

We also wish to put more emphasis on skill development and on-line discussions to enhance peer to peer communication.



We are looking for new ideas, suggestions and articles for future issues of Stimulus.

Please submit them to stimulus@stceo.org.

Eastern Ontario
Chapter

STC

SOCIETY FOR
TECHNICAL
COMMUNICATION

Mission Statement for 2002-03

Our chapter's mission is to work together in a spirit of community to promote and develop professional technical communication.

STCEO Website

<http://www.stceo.org>

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